



FACTORS UNDERLYING THE ECONOMIC MIGRATION OF GERMAN WOMEN TO POLAND

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JEL Classification: A10, F22, L26, O15.

Key words: migration, entrepreneurship, German businesswomen.

Abstract

The aim of the research and analysis was to identify the factors which contribute to stimulating *entrepreneurial* spirit among women. Special attention was paid to German women who had undertaken business activity in Poland. Based on a survey, it was determined that apart from such barriers to developing business as experienced by all businessmen (e.g. ensuring cash flows, having a sound knowledge of laws and regulations connected with business, and being competitive in the market), a female entrepreneur must meet other challenges arising from the position of a woman in society. Women's determination in the pursuit of business did not depend on gender or émigré status, but on their willingness to start a business in a culturally foreign environment. The respondents emphasized that they were highly active and goal-oriented. Women would rather be perceived as entrepreneurs than as women or migrants, because the characteristics assigned to the two latter roles do not coincide with the typical image of 'male entrepreneurship'.

UWARUNKOWANIA IMIGRACJI GOSPODARCZYCH NIEMEK DO POLSKI

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Słowa kluczowe: migracja, przedsiębiorczość, niemieckie przedsiębiorczynie.

Abstrakt

Celem podjętych badań i analiz była identyfikacja czynników, które kształtują przedsiębiorczość gospodarczą kobiet. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na grupę Niemek, które podjęły działalność gospodarczą w Polsce. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań ankietowych stwierdzono, że kobieta-przedsiębiorczyni, oprócz typowych dla wszystkich przedsiębiorców barier prowadzenia działalności gospodarczej (m.in.: zapewnienia płynności finansowej, znajomości przepisów i zmian zachodzących w gospodarce, dorównaniu konkurencji), musi sprostać wyzwaniom wynikającym z pozycji kobiety w społeczeństwie. O determinacji w podejmowaniu działań przedsiębiorczych przez kobiety nie przesądza płeć czy status emigrantki, lecz ich gotowość do podjęcia działalności gospodarczej w środowisku obcym kulturowo. Respondentki podkreślały swoją aktywność i zdolność do realizowania własnych planów. Kobiety chcą być postrzegane przede wszystkim jako przedsiębiorczynie, a nie jako kobiety czy migrantki, ponieważ cechy przypisane do tych ról nie pokrywają się z typowym wyobrażeniem o „męskiej przedsiębiorczości”.

Introduction

Markowski (2010, p. 9) made an accurate observation when he stated that human nature is associated with teleologism, which means the constant pursuit of an aim. Each person has their individual aims. According to Aristotle (2007), the most ultimate goal that everyone desires to attain is happiness. The difficulty lies in the fact that happiness lacks an unambiguous definition; nevertheless, it is certain that happiness is what we strive towards (Tatarkiewicz, 2012). Securing happiness for oneself and one's nearest and dearest, according to individual definitions thereof, will often involve making difficult decisions. Sometimes, it will require abandoning one's place of birth and leaving family in order to secure the means necessary to achieve the aim; such as happiness for oneself and of those with whom one shares life. Consequently, decisions about migrating are not rare (Markowski, 2010, p. 9).

Previously, Poland was predominantly a country of emigration with a so-called zero immigration. The flow of foreigners to Poland (immigration) is a relatively recent development. In the post-war years, we have been witnessing the process of an outflow of Polish population abroad (emigration). Immigration to Poland did not occur until the state and economic transformation took place, i.e. until the turn of the 1980s and 1990s (Organiściak-Krzykowska, 2013, p. 11).

Over the past three decades, the process of migration has intensified. The reasons are rooted in economic, cultural and social transformations, although some arise from international ethnic conflicts as well. Current migration is characterized by previously unobserved events, for example feminization of migration flows. Migration of women is connected with the position they occupy in the society of their native country, which in turn depends on living conditions, shaped by the state's social and economic situation. Among the benefits from migratory journeys there are material gains, which later contribute to a change in the migrant's position, her role in the family or in the local community,

as well as a growing sense of autonomy and emancipation (Głażewska, 2010, p. 11; Marks-Bielska *et al.*, 2015, p. 7, 8).

Grabowska-Lusińska and Jaźwińska-Motyłska (2013, p. 85) rightly noticed that the question of the gender of migrants is a relatively new problem mentioned in international studies on migration. Since 1970, that is since the so-called *Gastarbeiter* migration to Germany, women have been distinguished in migration research as a separate group, but mostly as wives of migrating men or as members of migrating families, and not as individual, independent migrant actors (Morokvasic, 1983; Kindler & Napierała, 2010). Women gained an independent position in research into migration once they started to be active economically in foreign labour markets (Kindler & Napierała, 2010). Earlier analyses concerning women-migrants stemmed from cultural stereotypes, where traditional roles assigned to women were associated with home and work (Smagacz-Poziemska, 2008), but also with the everyday struggle (*Migracje kobiet...*, 2008), a transnational approach to motherhood (Urbańska, 2008), an increased share of women migrants in the household labour sector (Kindler, 2012), marital migrations, women trade (Krzaklewska & Ratecka, 2008), and migration with children (White, 2011).

Setting up a company, securing adequate sources of funding, having a sound knowledge of regulations and transformations in the economy, as well as successfully competing with others are the challenges that all entrepreneurs face. However, a female entrepreneur must also meet the challenges arising from her position in a society (Ben-Yoseph *et al.*, 1994, p. 28).

The research conducted in Poland among businesswomen and their partners (*Zawód prezeska...*, 2017, p. 3) implicates some discernable cultural changes and gradual divergence from the traditional model of a relationship, where the principal (and oftentimes the sole) breadwinner is a man; consequently, the social roles of women and men are being redefined. The research results have proven that a mere 14% of husbands/partners would rather women did not work professionally but only look after home and children. No more than 8% of the respondents started their own business against the will of their husband/partner.

In general, however, the economic activity of women remains under a strong influence of social stereotypes, which determine how the workload is shared and what social roles the two sexes play. The social and cultural conditions are particularly significant when the development of entrepreneurship among women is considered (Godowska, 2011, p. 66). In the vast majority of countries analyzed it has been observed that women encounter problems in their search for employment, presentation of own skills or professional promotion. These needs can be satisfied by establishing one's own company, and the autonomy and independence thus gained appeal to a growing number of women (Balczak-Paradowska *et al.*, 2003, p. 110).

For the purpose of this article, economic immigration was defined as an influx of German women arriving in Poland in order to run their own companies.

Man-oriented research methods attribute a decision to start one's own business mostly to the motivation of an individual person. In this approach, personality traits shaped in a cultural or social context play the same role as social influences, e.g. education and upbringing, subjective perception, lack of alternative solutions or family patterns (cf. Brüderl *et al.*, 1998).

The problem of German businesswomen migrating to Poland has been only poorly explored. There are statistics dealing with the inflow of German capital to Poland, which are published by the National Bank of Poland (2012) and the Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency (2012), and which reveal that most (about ¾) of the 500 biggest foreign enterprises in Poland are companies with German capital. However, it is difficult to assess what percentage of German entrepreneurs in Poland is made up of women. Our analysis of the boards of directors in companies with German capital suggests that women occupy positions in the boards of just 5% of the said companies. Representatives of the institutions operating in Poland that have had the most profound knowledge of German entrepreneurship in Poland (e.g. the Polish-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry) claim that the business conducted by German women in Poland is not the subject of their analyses or data collection. This has been confirmed by a female member of the board of the European Forum of Female Business Owners. Hence, it is difficult to establish the number of German entrepreneurs in Poland.

At first sight, comparison between Germany and Poland should reveal numerous similarities between the two countries in the professional status of women. However, certain differences will emerge when a deeper insight is gained. In both countries, an unequal attitude to women at work can be seen, for example with respect to differences in earnings. The Eurostat (2012) data suggest that in 2011 women earned less than men did in both Germany and Poland. Germany belongs to these European countries where the said disproportions are the greatest (women earn around 22% less than men). Poland is one of the countries where this difference is the smallest (4.5%) (Kruse *et al.*, 2014, p. 27).

Women play an increasingly important role among migrants, a fact which is acknowledged by both politicians and researchers alike, and which finds its manifestation in the current research. The growing role of migrant women also pertains to female business owners. Their engagement in business is the subject of public and scientific debates, in Poland as well as in Germany.

The aim of this article has been to provide an insight into the migration by German women leaving for Poland in order to start business activity in our country. The paper draws on the results of a broader research project, entitled *German female entrepreneurs in Poland and Polish entrepreneurs in Germany. Comparison of the social and cultural phenomenon of Europeanisation*¹.

¹ The project was funded by the Polish-German Foundation for Science. It was performed by UWM in Olsztyn and Fachhochschule des Mittelstands (FHM), Bielefeld, Deutschland.

The research aim, such as exploring the conditions underlying decisions made by German women to start business in Poland, was achieved through a survey conducted among German female entrepreneurs running their own companies in Poland.

To reach German businesswomen active in Poland and to include them in our study, both direct and indirect methods of data acquisition were employed. The following Polish and German institutions were contacted: the European Forum of Female Company Owners in Warsaw, Foundation of Polish-German Cooperation in Warsaw, the FIKA Foundation of Active Women in Olsztyn, the Foundation for the development of Silesia and Support of Local Initiatives in Opole, the Association of Polish Women in Economy and Culture (seated in Köln), and the Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency, as their scope of responsibilities and functions suggested they could be helpful in making contact with potential research participants.. The information provided by these institutions was verified by confronting it with data collected in the National Court Register. In total, 55 German businesswomen in Poland were identified. Personal contacts of the research team were invaluable in reaching the potential respondents. Direct contact with 12 female entrepreneurs with whom questionnaire surveys were carried out was managed. Eventually, 12 correctly filled in questionnaires were analyzed. The research was conducted in 2014. The tabular-descriptive form of data presentation was used in this article.

Economically motivated immigrations of German women to Poland, in the light of the research

The reasons why women decide to migrate change and, as is the case for men, are mostly determined by economic circumstances (Pillinger, 2007, p. 14). One of the basic changes noted in the contemporary migration of women is that they are more and more often autonomous migrants. Women make their own decisions to migrate rather than follow men, as wives, mothers, daughters or fiancées (i.e. dependent persons), which until recently was very common. A professional career and work ensure higher prestige and more power than housework and child care (Świątkowska, 2010, p. 1).

Most of the companies run in Poland by the German female entrepreneurs who participated in the study employ no more than 10 employees. None of the companies

The project's number was 2013-17 (2013-2014). Its objective was to explore the presence of women in the German and Polish markets in a socio-cultural context. From the perspective of Europeanisation and globalization, it was important to examine whether and to what extent German women were active participants of business activity in the Polish market and, possibly, vice versa. On behalf of the Polish partner, the project manager was dr hab. Renata Marks-Bielska, and the persons involved in the project's execution were: prof. dr hab. Roman Kisiel, dr hab. Wiesława Lizińska, dr Karolina Babuchowska, dr Krzysztof Szulborski, and mgr Izabela Serocka.

has staff of over 100 employees. Nine of the twelve respondents are either owners or co-owners of the companies they run, while two occupy managerial positions and one is the founder of a foundation.

With respect to business domains, the surveyed group was rather heterogeneous. There were two representatives of each of these branches: education and science, agriculture, catering/food industry and tourism. Such branches as retail trade, employment services and advisory services had one representative each. Noteworthy is the fact that all the German businesswomen who took part in the study had several years of experience in business. All the respondents who answered this questionnaire reported having over 10 years of experience while six had been working in their jobs for over 20 years.

The respondents admitted that their decision to start a business in Poland was mostly encouraged by state transformation (market economy and democratic changes in Poland) and such political circumstances as Poland's accession to the European Union. Economic factors as well as the opening of the labour market played a less important role (Tab. 1). The relevant literature often highlights the role of economic conditions in making a decision about starting business activity abroad, but this was unconfirmed by the analyzed sample.

Table 1

Economic and political motivation for undertaking business activity abroad
(number of responses)

Factor	I strongly agree	I quite agree	I don't quite agree	I don't agree at all	No answer
Opened labour market	1	2	2	4	3
Economic factors	2	2	0	5	3
State transformation	5	2	1	3	1
Political change (the EU expansion)	5	3	0	1	3

Source: the authors, based on Kruse *et al.* (2014, p. 85).

Beside political factors, the German businesswomen also mentioned personal motivation, which most often included: an opportunity to implement an original business idea, gaining self-fulfillment, making a living or even becoming financially self-reliant (Tab. 2).

German women active in Poland have a positive image of female entrepreneurs. Both the views about Polish businesswomen and their self-perception as representatives of German female entrepreneurs contain many positive features, thus indicating a high level of self-respect and self-confidence shared by the migrant German entrepreneurs conducting businesses in Poland. The businesswomen who responded to our survey considered themselves as reliable

Table 2

Personal motivation for undertaking business activity abroad (number of responses)

Motivation	I strongly agree	I quite agree	I don't quite agree	I don't agree at all	No answer
New business idea	6	2	2	1	1
Make a living	4	4	2	2	0
Being financially self-reliant	4	2	1	3	2
Self-fulfillment	4	4	2	0	2
Better career	3	4	0	3	2
Both professional and family matters	1	3	1	6	1

Source: the authors, based on Kruse *et al.* (2014, p. 87).

(this opinion was expressed by 8 out of 12 respondents), goal-oriented (7 replies), well organized at work (5 responses) and professional (2 indications).

The German businesswomen working in Poland, when asked about the typical characteristics of Polish businesswomen, indicated: goal-orientation (5 answers), creativity (4 indications), being hard-working and flexible (3 indications each).

The female entrepreneurs showed a strong degree of socialization typical of their home country (Germany). Almost all the German respondents (except one, who did not answer this question) strongly or quite strongly identified themselves with the German image of an entrepreneur. In no way did any of them identify themselves with the Polish image of the entrepreneur.

Our analysis of the self-perception as a businesswoman demonstrated by the German women in Poland implicates their high self-esteem and self-confidence. This finding should be considered in the context of the success they have achieved in business. It turns out that half of the German businesswomen asked claim to have achieved a (very) high degree of success. Moreover, nearly all of them define success as client satisfaction (11) and a stable financial situation (10). For many (8), a determinant of success is the prestige and high position they enjoy in their environment.

The high self-esteem and positive self-image of German female entrepreneurs in Poland are also implicated by the women's responses to the question about what has helped them the most in their careers. For most (11 out of 12), the key factor was their own personality/character. Half of the respondents attributed their success to the support of family and friends and social contacts/networks. 8 responses suggested the importance of previous professional experience (5 – in the country of origin and 3 – in the country of emigration). The factors that they thought contributed the least to obtaining the current professional position were education (3 responses) and support by external institutions (1 answer).

Half of the surveyed German women who had previously conducted some business in Germany gathered information about Poland before leaving for our country. To this end, they mostly used widely available sources of information such as the Internet, newspapers, the radio and television. Contact with other entrepreneurs, as well as with associations and business environment institutions had also proven useful.

Apart from searching for information on their own, half of the respondents took advantage of external support institutions in Germany, both before and after their arrival in Poland. Before leaving, the support mostly consisted of language courses and intermediation in establishing contacts with Polish institutions as well as tax and legal consultancy. Once in Poland, the respondents most often resorted to tax, legal and business establishment consultancy (Tab. 3).

Table 3

Use of assistance provided by institutions before starting business activity in Poland
(number of responses)

Specification	Before leaving Germany	After arriv- ing in Poland
Legal consultancy	2	5
Taxation consultancy	2	3
Information meeting for persons who are starting business activity abroad	0	1
Informational meeting for persons emigrating to Poland	0	1
Consultancy concerning the financing of a new company and conducting business	1	1
Consultancy concerning the establishment of a new company	0	3
Intermediation in contact with Polish institutions	2	2
Language courses	3	0

Source: the authors, based on Kruse *et al.* (2014, p. 97).

Among the respondents, businesswomen who used various forms of support assessed the economic success they achieved more highly than those who did not resort to such assistance. Especially the use of different assistance forms before travelling to Poland seems closely related to professional success.

German female entrepreneurs in Poland stated that in both Germany and Poland, businessmen enjoy a privileged position in relation to businesswomen. At the same time, slight differences in the evaluation of this situation in Poland and Germany were noticed. The literature emphasizes the presence of numerous obstacles in a woman's pathway to a career, attributing this state of affairs to the stereotypical perception of gender, whereby women are appreciated mostly as ideal homemakers and mothers.

Stereotypically, a woman should not pursue her career at the expense of her family obligations and housework. Unlike men, whose stable family status strengthens their professional position, women are often made to choose between their careers and family.

The German businesswomen who participated in our study claimed (9 responses) that female migrant entrepreneurs were in a more difficult situation than Polish businesswomen. This opinion was justified by the fact that there are more barriers (of a legal, administrative or tax nature) to business in Poland than in Germany. The German female entrepreneurs suggested that other causes of problems in running a company in Poland were the constantly changing legal regulations and the language barrier.

The respondents concluded that as migrant entrepreneurs in Poland their starting position was more difficult. At this point, it is interesting to notice that the surveyed women were well integrated within their professional and private circles. The degree of integration, both professionally and privately, was ranked as very high on a scale from 1 to 4 (1 – very well integrated, 4 – not integrated at all). The average satisfaction with one's integration in the professional field is 1.6, while in private life it reached 1.7. A possible factor that positively affects integration is the use of assistance offered.

Conclusions

Setting up a company, securing sufficient financial resources, knowledge of legal regulations and changes in the economy as well as successful competition with others are the challenges that all entrepreneurs face. However, a businesswoman must additionally struggle with the challenges arising from her position in society. The economic activity pursued by women remains under a strong influence of social stereotypes, which determine the division of work and social roles of both sexes. The social and cultural conditions are particularly significant in a situation where women attempt to develop their spirit of enterprise. In most countries they are seen to encounter obstacles in their search for employment, the presentation of own skills or promotion to higher positions. These aims can be achieved through entrepreneurship and autonomy, as well as through self-reliance with one's own company. This is appealing to an ever growing number of women.

Economic entrepreneurship among women is a vital ingredient of contemporary societies. It is also a complex issue. On the one hand, there is a distinctly economic context. On the other hand, the self-employment of women and their entering the role of business owners are strongly culturally conditioned. Countries that create opportunities for all their citizens (including women) to prove their capabilities in conducting business experience more rapid economic growth.

Thus, unleashing the entrepreneurial potential inherent in women can be one of the sources of increased prosperity for an entire society.

The results of our survey carried out among German female entrepreneurs in Poland proved that the determination with which women undertake entrepreneurial actions does not depend on the gender or status of an immigrant, but on their readiness to start a business in a culturally-alien environment.

The businesswomen we surveyed perceive their gender and migrant status as an obstacle to success in business. Their self-confidence and perseverance may be closely associated with the conditions in which they act as migrant entrepreneurs and which they deem difficult. The respondents stress their dedication and determination to implement their own plans. This conviction is rooted in the experience of successfully tackling obstacles on the road to success.

The positive image of women entrepreneurs, which has emerged from the current research, indicates one of the most crucial aspects of entrepreneurship among migrants to a neighboring country: women want to be seen primarily as entrepreneurs, not as women or migrants, because the features assigned to the latter roles do not coincide with the typical image of „male entrepreneurship”.

Therefore, it is important to support entrepreneurial activities in Poland consisting in facilitating business operations at all levels of local government administration. It can be important not only for business, but also for foreign investors, including women.

Translated by Jolanta Idzkowska
Proofreading by Michael Thoene

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